

10 Social Customs You Should Know About Before Moving to Finland

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYSHUWcAnoU>

Transcript: <https://dontveter.com/ec/finland1.pdf>

In this video I will tell you about ten social customs that you should know about before moving to Finland.

What's up guys, and welcome back to the channel!

If this is the first time we're meeting, my name is Oliver and I'm a master's student in Economics at Aalto University here in Finland.

On this channel we talk about education and career development specifically here in Finland so if you're new here, do consider subscribing.

Before we jump into today's topic let me thank Hoas for sponsoring this video and Hoas, or the foundation for student housing in the Helsinki region, is one of the largest providers of student accommodations in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

I've been living in their apartments throughout my studies and I really recommend that you apply for their's as well.

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So, number one thing on the list is very, very important to us since and that is to be on time.

If I would have to mention one thing that we Finns have in common with, for example, Germans that would be punctuality.

No matter if you're meeting with your school mates to work on a case assignment, whether you are on your way to a business meeting or just going out for a cup of coffee with a Finnish friend, you should be there on time, preferably even a few minutes early just to make sure that you aren't late.

In Finland, punctuality is seen more as a virtue and being late, even if it was five minutes, can be seen as rude and disrespectful towards the other party.

Sure, the better you know the other person, the more leeway you can have, but especially when meeting with someone you aren't good friends with, be on time.

Also, when I say that you should be on time, it means to the minute.

If you agree to meet someone at five o'clock that means that you have to be there at five o'clock sharp, not 1705 but 1700.

Also, well, this could be debated somewhat, but if you agree to meet someone around 5:00 and you didn't set an exact time that also means five o'clock sharp.

Alright, so the second custom to note is that in Finland we don't keep our shoes on inside, rather shoes are left at the door and we hang around in our apartments in our socks.

This is very important to note, especially if you are visiting someone else's home and they do not remember to remind you about this.

I'm sure this has some historical meaning behind it, but most people simply see it as common sense, as walking inside with your shoes brings in dirt and mud during summer and snow during winter.

We simply want to keep our apartments clean.

That's basically it, so the funny thing is that this habit is also starting to spread into business life and nowadays there are many company offices where shoes are left at the door.

Sure, many of these companies are ~~either~~ startups, but this custom is also slowly creeping its way to more established institutions as well.

However, as with everything [else], there are exceptions to this rule.

For example, if you are invited to someone's home as a guest to a more formal party where the dress code requires you to wear dress shoes, you are allowed and even expected to wear your shoes inside.

So, the third social custom to note is that in Finland we are not huge fans of strict hierarchies.

This applies to both work and studying and there is no need to formally address each other as it is with many other cultures and languages.

This is why you don't really hear people saying sir or ma'am when addressing others in English.

This also applies to titles and in general we do not refer to other people using their titles like doctor or professor.

It is most common that people are addressed by their first names both in informal, as well as in formal settings.

Nevertheless if your professor, or, for example, your boss insists that you call them by their title or they prefer using a more formal manner of addressing each other please do so, it is just respectful.

However, it is good to note that this is quite rare, and usually only happens in an international setting where people wish to be treated as you would [be treated] in their respective cultures.

Alright, so the next four social customs are all related to acceptable topics of discussion, especially when talking to a person that you do not know well.

These are topics that we Finns feel very personal about and I would recommend that you do not approach these subjects unless you are very much certain that the person does not mind it.

First off, no talking about money and personal income.

Finnish people are very individualistic about their careers and therefore one's income is not something that we wish talked about unless we are on very good terms with the ~~object party~~ [person]. (Maybe "other party"?)

To give you some context, it is not rare for even the best of friends not to share their exact incomes with each other, so please do treat this topic with respect.

A second big no-no is religion, so while Finland is one of the most secular countries in the world, we find religion and one's beliefs, or non beliefs to be a personal matter that is not the business of others.

In practice, this means that we keep our personal beliefs to ourselves, while respecting others in the same manner, by neither inquiring about their religious beliefs, nor by pushing our own on to them.

All right, so the third topic ~~comes in the same breath as religion and that is politics.~~

So while social media has prompted many people to get more active in politics, it is still a personal matter that we do not like to speak about.

Most importantly, it is deemed extremely inappropriate to ask who someone voted for and it is not abnormal for even family members not to talk about their political points of view.

As you can guess, politics is a pretty sensitive topic nowadays and I suggest not bringing it up unless you are sure that it is appropriate for that situation.

So, the fourth topic to avoid might sound like a peculiar one but nevertheless it is a good one to note and that is asking about someone's parents and specifically, about their jobs or income.

Again, Finland is a very individualistic and equal society and the income of one's parents does not define you, their children, as people and thus it is a topic that should be avoided.

I will talk more about the equality of opportunity and how that defines us as a nation, perhaps in a future video but for now it is just good to know that the income of one's parents is a topic that should be avoided.

All right, let's move on to social customer number 8 which is that one should not brag about one's accomplishments, for example, possessions or income.

Again, as referred to previously, Finland is a very individualistic society where one's accomplishments are not something to brag about publicly but rather something to enjoy in private and with class.

Sure, this might be a bit different if you know the person well and you know that they are competitive and enjoy comparing themselves to other people, or for example it could be that some working environments pursue competitiveness and push everyone to do better.

But still, bragging about your income most likely just comes out as douchey.

someone who is more than a jerk, tends to think he's **top notch**, does stuff that is pretty **brainless**, thinks he is so much better than he really is, and is normally pretty good at **ticking** people off in an immature way.

*"**Wow** he's such **a Douche**"*

*"That was a Douche **move**"*

The next social custom is to keep to your word and not to give empty promises.

As I explained in this video, personal integrity and trust is very important to Finns especially when you are trying to build more personal relationships.

In order to build the trust, you should keep to your word and deliver what you promised.

In addition, it is good to note that in Finland casually ~~noting~~ saying, “hey, it was nice seeing you, maybe we should have coffee next week” actually means that you will either be invited for coffee next week or that the invitation for coffee is expected.

What I've understood is that this is somewhat different in some other cultures, for example, I've heard that in the US where “hey, let's have coffee some time” is universally known not to really mean anything.

Anyways, keep to your word and don't give empty promises and you will do just fine.

Alright, the last social custom that is good to know before moving to Finland is that even though we Finns really have a, let's say, a close relationship with alcohol, it is still not a custom to have wine or other alcoholic beverages with a lunch.

This is actually something that I personally find a bit sad, and it feels really odd that drinking a half a bottle of vodka during one night, especially in student circles, is ok.

But having one glass of red wine with lunch makes you an alcoholic.

I'm exaggerating of course, but you, you know, you get my point.

Anyways, in my opinion other European countries have a more healthy relationship with alcohol, ~~in the sense~~ however it's not the custom in Finland and you should just be aware of that before inviting your colleagues for a lunch.

Still, as with other things, there are some exceptions to the rule as well.

The first one to come in mind are some corporate events that are held at lunchtime where wine or sparkling might be served with food.

Also, another exception would be if you are on holiday and want to have a beer with food, that is deemed completely normal.

Yeah, I know, we're a bit weird with alcohol like that, but anyways that is it.

These were the 10 social customs that I think you should be aware of before moving to Finland.

Of course, there are plenty of others, but I think that keeping these in mind will ~~already get you far~~ [give you a good start at understanding Finnish culture].

That is all for this video.

If you found this video helpful do give it a thumbs up and share it with a friend who might have use for this information.

Also, if you have anything to ask about this, or any other topic related to studying or working in Finland, write them down [for] me in the comment section down below and I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Thanks again for watching guys, and I will see you in the next one, bye bye.